



Interview No. SAS11.27.02
Douglas MacArthur

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Q: Interview with Mr. Douglas MacArthur on November 27th at his home in Baltimore. I'd like to start out by asking you where you born. You don't have to tell me when unless you don't mind.

MacArthur: It doesn't matter. I was born in North Carolina. North Carolina, a small town called, a small town called Red Springs. And I came to Baltimore as a teenager to live with my uncle. This was in the, just before WW II.

I loved music. I've always loved music, but I just had never had a chance to get into it. But after World War II, I came back and they had opened the school here called Larry London School of Music, located on Monument Street. But he had most of his teachers were from the Baltimore Symphony. They were very good. My bass teacher was Bill Valegra. And he was one of the best bass players that was in the city. He would play, and he would sit, he would listen, he would teach, and he would talk and he would play. And after that, practically all the guys in the city, it was loaded. Oh, a lot of the guys were going out there.

See, we went under the GI Bill out there, and it was really nice if you wanted to really get into music. And so I played with several groups, and at that time there were so many groups around in Baltimore — almost every block you passed.

There are very few places they have that they have dances now, but then they had the Pythian Castle, the Elks Home, Strand Ballroom — that was over by the Royal Theater. And in East Baltimore they had the Biddle Hall. That was our regular home base, Biddle Hall. The theater was on the bottom and the hall was over top. And the guy would let us use it because it brought in people to the theater too.

Q: Tell me about going down to Kent Narrows. How did you all get down there?

MacArthur: Well, we went in two cars. When we first started, we were going there before the

bridge was built. We rode the ferry down there when we first started, and while we was there, they built the bridge and we started using the bridge going down to Kent Narrows.

Q: And the oyster house that you played for was just near the ferry?

MacArthur: After you got off the ferry, you went down about ten miles to Kent Narrows. That was the first little town, and went back into the oyster house that this guy had.

Q: And you said that the people there were up from Florida.

MacArthur: Florida and different places to shuck oysters.

Q: So these were folks that were there working for the summer.

MacArthur: Working for the summer, right.

Q: Okay. And you all came down to play for them.

MacArthur: Play for them, right.

Q: Now did other people from around the community come in to hear you play?

MacArthur: Yes, different people would come in. We'd start about eight o'clock at night and play til two. And it was always loaded. It was always full.

Q: Sounds like great fun.

MacArthur: It was a lot of fun. You don't make a million dollars, but you just have a million dollars worth of fun. Roy McCoy told me that one too. [Laughter]

Q: You would do that on Friday, and then you'd come back?

MacArthur: That's right. We'd do it Friday night and Saturday night, and we'd come back home Sunday morning.

Q: Now, when you were growing up, were there other musicians in your family?

MacArthur: No. There was no other musicians in my family. I just decided I loved music, and I don't know why I went into it.

Q: Well, I could imagine that would be a little bit hard for you to grow up in Baltimore and avoid listening to music. Seems like it was just everywhere.

MacArthur: At that time it was. There was music everywhere. That's why now I ask myself, I don't see very much music in Baltimore now like I'd love to see with the young people. I never hear of a young band now, musicians like we had in those days. Because in those days,

everybody was a musician. There was somewhere you could go and hear music everywhere.

But I don't know, it seems though it has faded out in the city here now.

Q: Now, when you came up from North Carolina, were you still in school at that point?

MacArthur: No. I'd finished school.

Q: And then you were drafted into the military?

MacArthur: Yes I was.

Q: When you were here in Baltimore?

MacArthur: Yes I was.

Q: Where did they post you in the war?

MacArthur: I went to California first. I was in horse cavalry. I've been thrown many a time. [Laughter] Yeah, I was in the 10th Cavalry. Well, the 10th and 28th were in California. The 9th and 27th was in Texas. They had over two thousand horses.

Q: Now, how did you end up in the Cavalry?

MacArthur: We really don't know. We were sent to Fort Meade, and they were taking all the guys out who were nineteen years old, nineteen and twenty years old. Put us in a barracks, said we were going to a special outfit. And that's what happened. We wound up in California.

Q: Was that your first introduction to a horse?

MacArthur: First introduction to a horse.

Q: What did you make of that?

MacArthur: It was rough at first, but they, they had some of the best teachers. Most of our instructors were from Texas. We had a captain was from Texas. Lieutenants were from Texas. Most of them had ridden most of their lives, and they knew horses. And they just taught you from the ground up, from the start. How to ride, how to sit the horse. That was another nice experience. And we were going overseas. After we went overseas, they broke it up and put us, made us a trucking outfit.

Q: Where were you posted overseas?

MacArthur: Italy. We went into North Africa, but we went to Italy driving trucks, and we stayed in Italy for eighteen months. It was on our way down South Pacific when the war ended. We

were happy.

Q: I would imagine you were. [Laughter] Well, when you were in Italy, there must have been service bands with you. You said you had gotten interested in music while you were in the war.

MacArthur: Yes. They formed a group, and this guy, he asked me about it, and I knew him and I told him I wanted to play, get a bass fiddle. They were getting the instruments for him, and we didn't have a bass fiddle so we got a tub, and put a string on it with a broomstick, and I played that. That's what I played at first.

And then they finally got a bass, but at that time I was moving further. We moved from Italy all the way through. We only stayed in one place for about, I'd say a month, a month and a half, and we'd move. We were driving front lines, taking ammunition and food and all to the front. And we'd have to follow the front.

Q: Sounds like a pretty rough tour of duty.

MacArthur: That's the way it sounds and is the way it was.

Q: And so you fell in love with music while you were dodging bullets.

MacArthur: Yes I did.

Q: What year were you mustered out?

MacArthur: In 1945.

Q: And then you, they shipped you back to Baltimore?

MacArthur: Shipped me back to Baltimore. See, I went in from Baltimore, and they shipped me back to Baltimore.

[I joined up with a friend] in the Army. He could play piano, and he and I scat. We used to play and get in the hall, and we'd drink beer and laugh and yell and carry on in scat songs, and I fell more and more in love with music at that time. A friend named Bernard Stokes — he was a musician too. He played piano.

Q: How did you get on to the Larry London School of Music?

MacArthur: Well, I had put in to go to the embalming school in Philadelphia, but everybody was going to music school, and I wanted to go to music school too. So I changed my mind and went to music school.

Q: A little livelier profession.

MacArthur: Livelier profession. [Laughter]

Q: So, now let me see, you had told me about working with Tracy McCleary. When did you meet Tracy McCleary?

MacArthur: Well, at that time, I met Tracy after I came into music, and he was playing the Royal Theater. And our Union hall, the colored musicians' union, was on Pennsylvania Avenue. It moved from Pennsylvania Avenue on the corner of Argyle and Mosher Street. We had a nice musicians' hall there. We sold beer. It was an old nightclub, and we had a rehearsal hall upstairs. And Tracy would come in there. All the musicians came in there, the guys that belonged to the union, the local. At that time we were 543, but after we merged with the white local here, it's 40-543.

But Tracy and the guys from the Royal, they were right around the corner so when they had their break, they would come in, and that's how I met all the guys there.

And so one night Tracy called me and asked me his bass player wasn't going to be there for the midnight show that was coming in, and asked me would I play the midnight show. I don't know, I just couldn't see myself ever playing the Royal Theater. So I told him yes. So I told my wife. She said, well, you've been into it for a long time, and that's what you wanted. Just give it a shot. She said you know you can do it. I said, that's it.

So I went that night that I was supposed to play. I put my uniform on, got my bass fiddle and tuned it up, got up on the stage. And just before we started, I was on the left on a raised, small platform, and my bass fiddle was all tuned, but I've never been more nervous in my life than I'd been then. And when I have heard the guy say, "and now Tracy McCleary and his Royal Men of Rhythm." And when he did, the drummer hit the first beat, and we went into our theme, and I thought I would die. [Laughter] But I made it, and then after that, I played quite a bit with Tracy. I enjoyed it. But to look out and see that audience, I thought it had me again. I didn't know what was happening.

Yes, I'm telling you, just to be a kid from East Baltimore, and to move up there. It was really nice. It was really nice.

Q: What an exciting story. My goodness. Especially having spent so much time on the other side of the stage.

MacArthur: That's right. Yeah, you go in there, you never thought you'd ever get on that stage. And to get on that stage, that was one of the most exciting things that ever happened.

Q: Do you remember some of the other musicians in Tracy's band? Who do you remember from back in those days?

MacArthur: Oh, let's see. Vernon Savage, Roy McCoy, let's see I knew all those guys. Pinhead, we called him Pinhead, he played trumpet.

Q: There was a trombone player that Tracy McCleary told a funny story about named Trummy?

MacArthur: Trummy Young. He called himself Trummy Young, but we called him Trummy. Tall guy. Yeah, that was true. I played with him several times too.

Q: And you tell me that you were working during the day.

MacArthur: Yes I did.

Q: So you had two careers.

MacArthur: Yes I did. I worked down Bethlehem Steel. But they gave me the time off that I needed, as long as I made five days at that time, I was all right.

Q: So you had a flexible schedule.

MacArthur: Had a flexible schedule. Right.

Q: What were you doing at Sparrows Point?

MacArthur: I was a turn supervisor in the blast furnace department.

Q: Very dangerous work.

MacArthur: Well, it was at one time, years ago. But everything now has modernized. There's very little danger. There's still danger there, but it's not like it was.

Q: When did you start at Sparrow's Point?

MacArthur: 1946.

Q: Okay. So almost right after the war.

MacArthur: Right after the war.

Q: And when did you retire?

MacArthur: I retired nineteen years ago. It will be twenty years next year.

Q: So you've had twenty years of being very busy.

MacArthur: Very busy. I help over at my church, I pick my grandson up from school, work on my lawn. It gives me something to do.

Q: You mentioned going over to the Club Orleans —

MacArthur: Yes.

Q: When Roy used to play. And you said Charlie Harris played over there.

MacArthur: Yes. Charlie Harris played at the Club Orleans.

Q: That must have been before he went on the road with Nat King Cole.

MacArthur: It was. And when he would come in town, he'd come over and play a set.

Q: He must not have had a whole lot of time in town during those days.

MacArthur: No, not too much time. But he would come in about once a year.

Yes. He and Pinhead were friends. They would always come to the club, up to the musicians lounge, and we would all sit around there and just talk and talk and talk. It was really nice to know those musicians.

Q: A lovely bunch of people.

MacArthur: They are. Musicians are beautiful people. And the old guys, they could tell stories about when they'd travel all around and how there would be, eight and ten of them in one car and all that. It really makes you laugh.

Q: Who were some of those old timers that you remember?

MacArthur: Well, Trummy was one. And Hal Rollins, Howard Rollins was another one. These are some of the old guys, Pinhead. I can't remember a lot of them right now, but there are several of them that were really some nice talkable guys.

Q: There was a lady that caught my attention who was connected with the Club Orleans and apparently a couple of the other clubs too. Her stage name was Detroit Red.

MacArthur: Detroit Red.

Q: I think her name must have been Livingston.

MacArthur: I think it was.

Q: Did you ever meet her?

MacArthur: Yes, I did.

Q: What was she like?

MacArthur: At the time I was just starting in the music. She had stayed at Club Orleans for a

long time. And that's where I met her. I enjoyed her routine. She had a wild routine. She was really good.

Q: What was her routine like?

MacArthur: She could sing, but she always put a lot of, what do you call it? In other words, she would take a song and do it her way. Uh huh. And at night when you get ready to go, and the club would close, she would say, don't care where you go, but you got to get the hell out of here. [Laughter] She kept you in stitches. Detroit Red.

Q: Very pretty lady.

MacArthur: Yes. Detroit was nice.

Q: Who were some of the other singers that you remember from then?

MacArthur: Um, let's see. Ruby's mother was a singer. And right off I can't think of many singers.

Q: There was another lady at the Club Orleans. Betty something.

MacArthur: It's Betty. You're right, but I can't think of her name. It's Betty. I remember her down the Club Orleans. Club Orleans was one of the best. It was one of the best clubs in the city at that time.

Q: Mr. McCoy said that Billie Holiday used to come there sometimes.

MacArthur: I've seen Billie in there.

Q: And just drop in and sing.

MacArthur: Well, she would sing, sometimes she'd sing with the guys. She'd come in there. She knew guys like Jake. Jake was the drummer. He's been around for years. He had been around for years at that time. Jake. She'd come in there to see the guys she had known, you know, and Roy McCoy and those guys had been on the road.

Q: So did you meet Roy before he had gone on the road with Lionel Hampton?

MacArthur: Yes.

Q: Now he was still at the Royal then?

MacArthur: He was in and out at the Royal. Yes, Roy played the Royal when he was in town, if he wasn't on the road.

Q: You had mentioned how much music there was back there in the '40s and early '50s, and

how comparatively little there is today. What do you think happened? What do you think caused that?

MacArthur: Well, I think cheap music caused it. These kids today, everybody's got a boom box, everybody's got earphones on, and they can get all the music they want from just plugging in their box.

Q: Without having to make their own.

MacArthur: Without having to make their own. And then, too, another thing about these young people is that they don't want to rehearse. Everybody wants to come in and hit the stand right away. They don't realize you've got to start low and rehearse and get that music down, get what you know people want to hear and then bring it forward. That's the best thing that could happen.

Q: Well, I wonder — I think a lot of people aren't aware of how much discipline is required of a musician, how many hours it takes before you can get to that stage.

MacArthur: That's right. There's a lot of people who don't. A lot of people, just like I heard when we were at Larry London's. The teachers would tell us when they got a group of guys — they'd say, you don't go in here and buy a horn and go on the Royal Theater next week. That doesn't happen. It takes time. And when you go, be ready to go.

Q: Where did you find your bass? Finding an instrument is like finding a wife. That's a tough thing. [Laughter]

MacArthur: I was working down at the [Sparrow's] Point, and this guy told me he knew a lady had a bass fiddle, lived out in Overlea. This was way back in the '50s. I went out there, and I bought that bass fiddle from that lady for one hundred dollars. And I've had that bass. I have that bass downstairs now in my cellar.

Q: Where was it made?

MacArthur: Czechoslovakia. It's a Czech bass.

Q: So it was love at first sight in Overlea, and you've been with that bass ever since.

MacArthur: Ever since, same bass.

Q: When you were growing up in North Carolina, what prompted your family to move up here?

MacArthur: Well, I came to live with my uncle. My uncle's son died, and he wanted me to come and live with them. He had two daughters.

Q: And so he had lived in Baltimore for a long time?

MacArthur: Yes. He lived here for years.

Q: And what was his profession, what was his?

MacArthur: He worked for Pennsylvania Railroad in the roundhouse at the end of Monument Street.

Q: And did he ever try to encourage you to follow him into the railroad?

MacArthur: Well, I worked at the railroad before I went in the Army. I worked in the roundhouse before I went in the service. I've had a lot of jobs before I found the one that I really wanted.

Q: So where did you go from the railroad then? You went from the railroad right into the service?

MacArthur: No, I had a job at an overcoat factory, pressing seams in overcoats that I hated. [Laughter] Just hated that one! Worked, let's see, where else did I work? I worked in a hospital, worked as a dishwasher at a hospital. I worked at a lot of jobs. Worked with a contractor. I had a lot of jobs.

Q: Now, what led you to Sparrow's Point?

MacArthur: I went down there with a friend of mine. He was going down to get a job, and he said, well, while you're here, you should put in an application. So I said, well, I will. I put in an application and got hired the same day. And I did not want the job.

Q: Oh no. So you started right away?

MacArthur: Started right away. So I worked from 3 to 11 the next day. I hated it at first, but the more I was there, the more I loved it. Then I started going to school for supervisor, and it was nice.

Q: Well, those were well paying jobs.

MacArthur: Yes. It was.

Q: And you ended up spending?

MacArthur: Thirty-seven years.

Q: Thirty-seven years. Pretty impressive. Now how long did you juggle your musical life with your work at Sparrow's Point?

MacArthur: There wasn't much juggling because, as I said, after they found out I played music, they gave me open time, you know, as long as I made five days. But I couldn't do that after I got

to be turn supervisor. But by that time I had cut back anyway.

Q: You've watched the changes in Pennsylvania Avenue. The years after the war must have been terrifically exciting to be there.

MacArthur: Yes. It was, it was. The only thing I regret is seeing Pennsylvania Avenue go the way it is. We are the only city that I know that doesn't have — most of the places that had those music, where musicians came from all over, like the Royal Theater, they're still in business. In New York they still have the, what is it?

Q: Apollo?

MacArthur: Apollo. Philadelphia still has — I think it's the Earl. Richmond has theirs. It was, at one time, it was a circuit. They'd start in New York, come to Philadelphia, come to Baltimore, Washington and Richmond. But we're the only one that I know that don't have the theater. Got completely rid of the theater.

Q: And ironically with an urban renewal project, I never could figure that one out.

MacArthur: I couldn't either. I've heard a lot of people could have saved it [say] that they wished they had worked on it, but it's too late now. It's all gone.

Q: And it wasn't just the only theater. There were other theaters on the Avenue, like the Regent.

MacArthur: Yeah, the Regent.

Q: And was it the Lincoln?

MacArthur: The Lincoln. They had about five, six theaters on that avenue.

Q: Well, Rivers Chambers Orchestra must have been still around. You must have crossed paths at one time.

MacArthur: Yes, I knew most of the guys in Rivers' band too. See, one thing, I was bartending, tending bar at the musicians lounge. And mostly at night, when they came off gigs, we would all come in there and sit and tell lies and drink beer. Wherever we played, mostly we would come by and stop in the lounge and have a beer or a drink before we went home.

Q: This is at the musicians union?

MacArthur: Musicians union, yes.

Q: What a nice thing to have where everybody can get together.

MacArthur: But see after we merged, it'd taken all that away. We just don't have that anymore.

Musicians spread, some of us gave it completely up. I still belong to the local.

Q: I saw you in the union book.

MacArthur: Yes. I still belong to the local, because I love music.

Q: Well, I looked for you at the luncheon.

MacArthur: I didn't go this year. I was there last year.

Q: Yeah, last year I didn't go.

MacArthur: I was there last year. I didn't go this year. I can't understand why they don't have a band there to play instead of a single person.

Q: Well, next year maybe there should be a revival of the Blue Notes. [Laughter]

MacArthur: Would be nice.

Q: How many of your music friends are still around?

MacArthur: Let's see. There's only about three or four of us still here.

Q: That's enough for a group.

MacArthur: That's all there is, I think, about four of us still here. But we enjoyed it.

Q: So who are the other three?

MacArthur: Curt Ellison, the fellow on the tenor. And the fellow on trombone. I don't think he's on that list — named Dooley. He came later.

Q: Dooley, what was his last name?

MacArthur: Elmer Dooley. Played trombone.

Q: And there must be one more floating around somewhere.

MacArthur: There's one more somewhere. I think Count is still around.

Q: Well, maybe we'll see you at next year's luncheon.

MacArthur: I don't know. I probably will. My daughter — we were there last year, or was it year before last? The year that Tango [Roy McCoy] sat at our table. Year before last it was. Tango came in, he and his wife. He'd been sick at that time, and he and his wife came in and somebody was with them, and he had everybody laughing. I told my daughter, I said, that's one

of the guys that gave me my first start in music. And Charlie Harris came in and he sat at our table. We all sat together. My daughter, she's been around musicians. She knew Tango from years ago. My wife passed seven years ago, and my daughter went with me out there to the luncheon.

Q: Do you just have the one daughter?

MacArthur: One daughter and one grandson.

Q: Did she study music at all?

MacArthur: No, she didn't.

Q: And what about that grandson?

MacArthur: He's football. He says he's gonna be a football player. He's eight years old, plays peewee football.

Q: Is he going to be as tall as you are?

MacArthur: I don't think he is.

Q: When did you move away from the east side?

MacArthur: I moved over here, we've been here forty-two years. Moved here in '61, 1961.

Q: Now when you came back from the war, did you go back over on the east side?

MacArthur: Yes, I did. I wasn't married then. I was single. And I met my wife, and we married.

Q: Where did you meet her?

MacArthur: A friend of mine introduced me to her.

Q: I always feel sorry for the musicians' wives because, you know, the gentlemen are always off working at dances.

MacArthur: You got to be broadminded.

Q: They have to be very broadminded.

MacArthur: Got to be broadminded. My wife was very broadminded, because once in a while somebody would ask me, MacArthur, are you married? I said yes. They said where is your wife? I said there she is sitting over there. Oh no, you wouldn't be talking to us and buying us a drink if your wife was here. I said come here a minute. We'd go over there. I said, will you tell them who you are? She said what do you mean? I said aren't you my wife? She said the minister said

so. [Laughter] They would laugh.

Q: Well, you know, the dances at the halls always sounded like they were so much fun.

MacArthur: They were.

Q: Who sponsored all the dances?

MacArthur: Usually clubs sponsored them. Clubs, different clubs around sponsored them. See there was so many clubs around then. People would get together and eight or ten of them would form a club, and they would have, sponsor dances, and sometimes the guy who owned the hall would. Just like the Biddle Hall, the manager that owned the theater and the hall he would sponsor dances.

Q: I was interested in reading about some of the Bayside places where people used to go and listen to music. Did you ever play at any of the places like Carr's or Brown's Grove?

MacArthur: I played Carr's Beach once. I played Carr's Beach once before it was changed over. And I never played Brown's Grove, but I did play the boat going down. Well, the boat used to leave Baltimore the first weekend I think it was in September and would go down to Cambridge. And it was a big do, everybody in Baltimore, if you had somebody working for you then practically everybody taking one of those days off.

Q: Really.

MacArthur: One day or two. The boat was like that. The boat was packed. We played on that boat for about four years.

Q: So this was every year?

MacArthur: Every year. That was everybody — are you all playing on the boat going down to Cambridge? Yeah, I'm going down. It was really nice. Everybody that was anybody around east Baltimore was down there going on the boat. Not east Baltimore, all over Baltimore.

Q: So it would go to Cambridge and then would it stay?

MacArthur: It would stay for about an hour, you had an hour to walk around, people would get crabs and things. And then they'd get back on the boat and come back to Baltimore. It was an all day.

Q: My goodness. What fun.

MacArthur: It was really fun.

Q: And now this was, tell me again what time of year this year?

MacArthur: September. Always the first or second week in September.

Q: Now when did it stop?

MacArthur: I don't know. Oh, it stopped years ago. I don't think it went on after I came out of east Baltimore much longer.

Q: What was Carr's Beach like?

MacArthur: Carr's Beach was really nice. It was really nice, clean. We played there, once or twice we played Carr's Beach. The way we would get those jobs, somebody would hear us one place and call us and book us in. But Carr's Beach was nice.

Q: Yeah, I saw, there was a photograph taken at Carr's Beach with Sarah Vaughan singing down there.

MacArthur: Yes. They brought in big talent. Uh huh. Top talent.

Q: When, I wanted to ask you, when was the picture taken of Doug's Blue Notes with Ruby [Glover] standing at the microphone?

MacArthur: When was that taken?

Q: She looks like she's about seventeen years old.

MacArthur: Ruby was young then. I really couldn't give you a definite date on when that was made.

Q: Was it a radio broadcast or was it?

MacArthur: No. We were playing at the Elks Home when that was made. Let me see it a minute.

Q: Sure.

MacArthur: Yes, we were playing at the Elks Home

Q: And was Mr. Anderson the photographer?

MacArthur: I'll tell you who took that. Anderson, Church Anderson. Do you know Church Anderson?

Q: Yes.

MacArthur: His brother was a photographer.

Q: Oh, that was Mr. Anderson.

MacArthur: Yes. Church Anderson's brother [Gordon]. I used to, remember Church Anderson's group. He was one of the older guys around. Yeah, Church Anderson's brother made that picture.

Q: He's living up in New York now. He used to take a lot of the photographs at the Royal Theater.

MacArthur: He did. He sure did. He's the one that made that picture.

Q: Okay. That's very interesting. So was this your band's standard publicity shot for the time?

MacArthur: Yes it was.

Q: And, you know, were there other ones without Ruby?

MacArthur: I have one I don't think Ruby's on. No I don't think Ruby's on this one. I don't have one myself now. My daughter has one, and my sister has one. I don't know where those pictures are. They're around somewhere.

Q: Well, now you have a grandson. You need to take care of these things.

MacArthur: Yes, I should. That's right.

Q: East Baltimore, my goodness, you had such wonderful musicians over there. Chick Webb.

MacArthur: Oh it was a Mecca there. It was really nice. East Baltimore was everything in music.

Q: And you don't hear that.

MacArthur: Charles Keene, all those guys came out of there. All those big time guys came out of east Baltimore.

Q: Why is that when people talk about music in Baltimore, you hear about Pennsylvania Avenue, but very few people mention all the things that were going on on the east side?

MacArthur: Well, because the Royal was on Pennsylvania Avenue, and that was the Mecca there, and I think everybody just remembers that. There was a lot of clubs on there too that hired the musicians. Those nightclubs on the Avenue, practically every one of them had at least a four-piece band.

Q: Also I wanted to ask you, I was, there was an oral history done of Mr. Willie Adams, and he talked about being involved with the midnight shows at the Royal Theater. Do you know what the story was on Mr. Adams?

MacArthur: Willie Adams?

Q: Yes.

MacArthur: I really don't know that. I've never knew him, you know. I knew him, not personally. I never knew him to be with the shows at the Royal. I mean, it could be. I'm not saying it didn't happen. I didn't know him as that.

Q: Ruby was also talking about a person named Bea Booze.

MacArthur: Club Orleans. Yes, Bea Booze, she sang over there for a long while. She was one of the top entertainers too, but she came in and sang for a while, and then she stopped. Yeah, I remember her from Club Orleans. Bea Booze. At that time people could come in. There's always someplace you could go and hear a band, like the Subway, the Diamond Subway, that's another club that was respectable here in the city.

Q: And where was that?

MacArthur: It was on Fremont Avenue, way down Fremont. Can't think of where it was, but it was on Fremont Avenue, but it was really a nice club.

Q: Now I was just fascinated to find out from Ruby how much activity there was over on the east side. I mean, I knew about the Club Orleans, but that was about the only one, and she said, oh no, no.

MacArthur: No. There's a lot of clubs there. There were nice clubs over there. There was the Savoy up on Monument and Bond, Savoy nightclub. We worked Savoy, small group of us worked Savoy. And the Elks Home was over there. We worked the Elks Home. There was more clubs over there too. There's a lot of clubs in east Baltimore at that time. I don't know where they came from, but these holidays like this one, clubs were full. But today they aren't full like that. I think everybody stays home and listens to their tapes and everything. People don't go just now to clubs like they used to.

Q: One of the things that I find is promising now is School for the Arts. We've started seeing some really good players coming out of there and coming into Peabody. And, of course, now we have for the first time a jazz program at Peabody.

MacArthur: It's good to see young people coming into it because it gets to me once in a while. I'm over east Baltimore often, and I just think about the good times we had over there. In the summertime guys would be in somebody's backyard. You'd hear a horn blasting, backyards would be full of people. It was really nice. Always somewhere to go.

Q: When did that start, when do you recall that starting to wane, start breaking down?

MacArthur: I think it started over twenty years ago — it began to slow — I think really after Pennsylvania Avenue was torn down, I think the whole music did. I know when our musicians'

hall [closed down], when we merged with the white local, it really had taken a lot out of it because we don't have a place to hang together. Everybody knew where everybody was. When you seeing Vernon — when you seeing so and so — Tracy, when you seeing so and so? Now we just don't have a place to see musicians.

I haven't seen Tracy McCleary, I know it's been eight or ten years.

Q: Well, I was talking to Ethel Ennis — it was at Ellis Larkin's funeral, and, you know, people were all catching up, standing around talking.

MacArthur: That's what they do.

Q: And we were talking about maybe once, once every six months maybe we should just stage a funeral before anybody has to die so people could just come together.

MacArthur: That would be nice. To stage it anyway.

Q: I want to thank you for letting me come and take up your time.

MacArthur: Oh, you're welcome.

Q: And bother you.

MacArthur: Anything I can do to advance the music that I enjoy.

END OF SESSION